

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**THE WORKING PEOPLE OF LOWELL
LOWELL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
MARY BLEWETT/MARTHA MAYO**

**INFORMANT: FLORIE HAMM
INTERVIEWER: SUZETTE JEFFERSON
DATE: OCTOBER 26, 1985**

**S = SUZETTE
F = FLORIE**

85.23

S: Hi! This is October 26th, I'm in Florie Hamm's home, and we're interviewing her for the working people of Lowell. Okay, before could you start out by telling me ah, about your parents and where they came from, and why they came to Lowell?

F: Well, I really don't know why they came to Lowell, but my father came from Halifax and my mother came from Nova Scotia.

S: Uh huh.

F: My mother's people moved from Nova Scotia up here to Lowell, but I don't know why they ever done it, but they all moved up here.

S: Now this was when she, your mother was a young girl?

F: Yes, cause my mother was married here in Lowell.

S: Oh, so she met your father in Lowell?

F: Yah. My father was ... He came up here to visit sometime. Some of his family came up this way, and he came up here. And there's a, and they got [unclear] and then they were married.

S: Huh, now your father was German?

F: No, well I don't ... No I think he was English. Hamm was English name. Some of them said it's England, and some of them said it's German. So I don't know.

S: I see.

F: You know, I never really inquired about that part of it.

S: And how about your Mom? Was she, ah English or?

F: No she was ah, English too, as far as I know.

S: Right.

F: You know.

S: And do your parents work in the mills?

F: Ah, no. My mother never worked the mill, I don't think, when she came here.

S: I see.

F: But then she might have when she was younger, because she was only eighteen when she got married. She...

S: Oh!

F: So she might have worked in the mills here.

S: Okay. And where did your parents live when they first got married?

F: They must have lived on the street someplace.

S: Umhm.

F: Because that's when my ah, well they came from Nova Scotia up here. They moved up where the old Gas Company is now, that way. Up around Rock Street or some of those places up there.

(S: Right.) I think that's where they lived, up around there.

S: Uh huh. And um... Now where were you born? Were you born at home?

F: As far as I know, years ago that's what they done.

S: Right. [Laughs] And, and what house was that, on what street, do you remember?

F: Down on Billings Street here.

S: On Billings Street.

F: But it's all changed around down there now. The places we lived in was all torn down and other houses put up there.

S: Oh, ok. So how many children were there in your family?

F: I had four sisters and two brothers.

S: Oh, so you had a big family huh?

F: Yah.

S: Yah. Now... and you own, your parents, you lived in a house that your parents owned, or you rented, or... ?

F: We used to rent.

S: You rented.

F: We used to rent them.

S: And how was the, you know, was it a really nice house or...?

F: Oh yes, they were nice places.

S: Uh huh.

F: Years ago we came from Broadway. If you know where the Locks & Canal Office on Broadway?

S: Yes.

F: Well we lived right next door to that years ago, right in front of Dummer Street.

S: Oh, okay.

F: And then uh, my father wanted to get out to the country and we moved out to Dracut out in the Navy Yard.

S: Right.

F: And we lived out there, and then he took sick and we moved back to the city again.

S: Oh I see. So you were born in Lowell and then you moved back out to Dracut.

F: Yah. Moved from, well moved from here over the bridge, over the Broadway, (S: Uh huh) years ago when I was a kid.

S: How old were you then?

F: Huh?

S: How old were you when you moved to Broadway?

F: Oh, it must have been five, six years old when we living over there.

S: And then you lived there for how long?

F: Oh probably many years. And then we moved out to Dracut and lived out there a good many years.

S: Uh huh.

F: And then we moved back into the city here on Ludlam Street.

S: Now how old were you when you moved back to Ludlam Street?

F: Oh, about sixteen.

S: Okay.

F: Somewhere around there.

S: So which house do you remember as home?

F: All of them!

S: All of them?

F: All of them. I've been living in this house fifty six years!

S: So there wasn't any one particular house that stood out?

F: Oh no no, they were all homes. No matter what they were, they were all homes.

S: Yah. Now did um, you have any other relatives living with you in the homes or..?

F: No. Yes I did, my grandfather. My mother's father lived with us for awhile.

S: Uh huh!

F: He was a hundred and one when he died.

S: Wow! Runs in the family huh!

F: Yah, he was a hundred and one when he died.

S: Huh! Okay. So um, what were your houses like inside? Could you give me a tour of like one of your houses?

F: Well, they were just three rooms downstairs and four bedrooms upstairs like any ordinary house would be.

S: Uh huh. Well houses are different now a days. That's why I asked.

F: Yes, houses are different today than they were then. There was no baths in the houses at that time. (S: Uh huh) You had to go out to the toilets outside.

S: That's right, you had outhouses?

F: Sure!

S: Until what time?

F: Oh, oh, since 1918 or so, 19?

S: What else was different about the houses?

F: No much more different in them than they are today.

S: Where did you have, like, when you had social gatherings, where did you get together in your house? Like in your living room, or did people like to be in the kitchen the most?

F: We lived...we lived one room to another. When we lived down in Dracut we used to have a piano. My sister used to have a crowd come in on Sunday afternoons, and they used to play and sing all afternoon there.

S: Uh huh. So it was all over the house that you...?

F: Oh sure, we were never, we'd go all over the place. We [unclear] had to be tied down any place.

S: Yah. Now what about food in your family? Did you have any special dishes or things that you ate on special days. Like um...?

F: No.

S: No particular kinds of food?

F: No. Years ago you were brought up on almost anything, years ago.

S: Umhm. Do ...You had plenty of food to eat though in those days?

F: Oh, we had plenty of food to eat.

S: Yah, but you just ate what was put before you?

F: Whatever my mother cooked we ate it.

S: Yah (both laugh) that's funny.

F: We had to in those days.

S: Now what about jobs in your house? I mean like you had chores to do as a child?

F: I used to be the cook of the house when I was working.

S: When you were working?

F: And my oldest sister, well that was after my mother died. My oldest sister used to do the housework.

S: Now how old were you when this happened? When you were....

F: Well, my mother died... well I must have been twenty or so when my mother died.

S: Uh huh. So you became the cook in the household? (F: Oh yah) And were you working besides that?

F: Yup!

S: You were working full time and cooking?

F: I was...I used to work. When my mother was well we lived down on Ludlam Street. I used to come home every Saturday and start to cook. I was a cook then.

S: Right. And your sister was a housekeeper?

F: Yah. My sister used to do the housework for my mother. After we came home from work.

S: So you were one of the older ones?

F: No, I was the fourth one.

S: The fourth?

F: There were three older than I was.

S: Ah, and when you... ? You worked in the mills?

F: I worked, my first job was out in North Chelmsford if you know where that is, (S: Yes, uh huh) North Chelmsford. Well I was one of these doffers out there, if you know what those are? (S: Yes) Well I use to be a doffer out there in North Chelmsford.

S: In which mill? Do you know the name of the Mill?

F: I forget the name of the mill out there in North Chelmsford. (S: Right) That was years ago.

S: Yah. [Chuckles] Well how old were you when you went to work in the mill?

F: Maybe about fourteen or so. At that time you went to work awful early.

S: How come you went to work that early? Was it because ah... ?

F: Well there was one of our neighbors worked out there and got talking to my mother. (S: Uh huh) And my mother thought well, try me in to work someplace. (S: Uh huh) So I went out there and worked.

S: Now what about school? You didn't want to go through any more school?

F: Oh yes, well I didn't go through school. I just went about the fourth grade or so in school.

S: Right. And was that because that's where you wanted to stop or your Mom, parents wanted you to stop?

F: Well I wanted to stop there and my mother wanted it to stop there. You know.

S: And that was true of everybody in your family?

F: Ya. Ah, that's what they done years ago.

S: Umhm. So after the fourth grade, everybody, all the children in your family, ah, would start working or helping your parents?

F: Well, the, they... See, there was three older than I, and they were working at that time, off and on.

S: Uh huh, right. So you went to work full-time when you were fourteen though? (F: Yah) So between fourth grade, when you were what about ten years old, till the age of fourteen, what did you do then?

F: There wasn't much of anything we done.

S: You just helped your Mom?

F: Just to help my mother around the house.

S: Watching children and... (F: Yah) Doing the traditional kind of chores, (F: Sure) that kind of thing? So now how long did you work as a doffer over in North Chelmsford?

F: Oh, I worked out there, well I would say three years, (S: umhm) you know. And I left there and came into the Lowell. And ah, when we moved to Lowell came and worked in the Lawrence Manufacturing Company. Do you know where that is? (S: Oh, okay, yah.) I worked in there, I worked on underwear down there and then I went in stockings.

S: Umhm. Now were you working as a doffer there too or...?

F: No, on inspecting the underwear and inspecting stockings at that time as you done in the hosieries.

S: Okay. Now what did you think of your job of doffing? Did you like that, or was it hard work?

F: It was alright for the time being. (S: Yah). It was alright for the time being.

S: Did you think it was dirty work or... ?

F: It was dirty work. (S: Yah) It was dirty work.

S: And how many hours a day did you have to work?

F: From six o'clock in the morning till six six o'clock at night at that time.

S: (Laughs) That's a long day huh?

F: You said it. I had... I know what the hard times are.

S: And you had to work six days a week?

F: Sure, Monday through Saturday at that time. And for small wages too at that time.

S: Do you remember what you had for wages?

F: Oh, I don't think we'd bring home more than ten, fifteen dollars a week, if we got that much.

S: And did you get to keep all of your wages?

F: Oh no, you'd give it to your mother at that time.

S: Everything? (F: Yah) And did she give you anything back?

F: Oh yes, you got your spending money out of it. So much.

S: Now how about the boys in the family? Did they have to give your parents their wages too?

F: Yup, everybody did till they got old enough to get out.

S: And then they had their own wages?

F: Yah. But we all stuck together until my father died and then my oldest brother got married.

S: So then you went to, so you were about what, seventeen when you went to work in the other place?

F: Yah, it was around that, seventeen or so.

S: And what was the name of the place again?

F: Lawrence Manufacturing Company. (S: Ok) And then from there I went down Lawrence.

S: Oh, you worked in the Lawrence mills?

F: I worked down to Lawrence for twenty six years, in the hosiery down there.

S: Wow! Okay. So you must of experienced when you were working there like 1912 strike?

F: Sure!

S: And what was that like, I mean, ah... ?

F: In Lawrence? (S: Yes) It was alright. We traveled back and forth in a, in a machine.

S: Umhm. And did you ah, well what were your feelings about the strike and you know, was it ... ?

F: It was alright.

S: Yah, was there a lot of violence or anything or?

F: Oh no, no, no, we had a lovely crowd working with us.

S: Uh huh. And so do you think it was worth it to have the strike, or?

F: We never striked down there.

S: Oh you didn't actually strike where you were?

F: Huh?

S: You didn't actually strike where you were?

F: No, I never was in any strikes. (S: Oh) No. (S: Okay) No.

S: I see, so you were just around where it was, there were strikes?

F: Yah, just when I heard in Lowell, around here is strikes and even, I never worked where there was any strikes.

S: Oh, so you kept working during all these different.

F: Yes.

S: Things that were going on during World War I too?

F: Yah.

S: Oh, okay. Now what do you remember about your neighborhood, um, and how it's changed?

F: Well (clears throat) when we first come up on this street here, they use to call it the French Highlands. (S: Uh huh) But they're all gone now. That was all owned...different people living up here now.

S: But is use to be almost all French people?

F: Yah it was all the French. Foisy's and Philians, all those people lived up around here.

S: So did you... ? Now how old were you when you moved here in this area of town?

F: Oh, (sighs) I must have been about twenty or so when we lived up here, came up here to live or so. Gee, I don't know. (S: And it was?) It was too many years ago.

S: And you, almost all French people?

F: It was all French when we first came up here on this street.

S: So did you, your family feel out of place?

F: Oh, no, no.!

S: Everybody got along pretty good?

F: Because they could speak English as well as we could. (S: They could?) Yah!

S: So there wasn't any problems?

F: Oh no, there was no...nothing like that.

S: Yah. So the whole neighborhood got along. It was just mainly French and just you people. Was there anybody else besides the French?

F: No, on this street, French was on this street. And they called it the French Highlands. And nobody could build anything if, you know, not unless they knew what they were building. (S: Oh, they had to be... ?) I was, no, suppose to be no stores or anything on this street when we first come up here. (S: Uh huh) But of course after all those old people died, well then they started to build stores in here.

S: So what do you remember about your neighborhood? Any particular, oh, smells or sights that, that bring memories back to you?

F: Oh, she was just a quiet neighborhood.

S: Uh huh. And were there a lot of stores near by that you could go shopping in, or did you have to go downtown?

F: We had to go downtown. There was no stores here at that time.

S: Okay. So you had to go over the bridges to go down, (F: Yes) to go shopping?

F: Yah. I had to go over the Aiken Street bridge to go to work.

S: Hm, and how did you get to work? Did you walk?

F: We walked to work. We didn't have, it wasn't that far (S: Uh huh) to walk over the bridge to go to work.

S: Yah, okay. Now you say the neighborhood has changed a lot since then?

F: Oh yes, the neighborhood has changed.

S: In what ways?

F: Well for one thing, the undertaker over there, [Foisys] use to live there and the undertaker's there now. (S: Uh huh) And over here use to be Morrisons, over there, there was a ladder man, making ladders and things. Well there was, somebody was over there. So everything is changed around here.

S: Okay. Is there more traffic going through the neighborhood too now and ... ?

F: Yes, there was no machines at that time so many as there are today.

S: That's right, there was horse and buggy back then.

F: Sure, horse and buggy and years ago there was iceman coming around with your ice. (S: uhm) Wood man coming around.

S: What other types of vendors would come around?

F: Huh?

S: What other types of people would come around? Ah?

F: Well, we had neighbors coming in and out. (S: Umhm) Years ago they were more friendly than they are today.

S: You think so?

F: Sure!

S: Why do you think that is?

F: I don't know, people seems to stay by themselves today, more than they did years ago.

S: Do you think it's because everybody knew each other or..?

F: Well everybody's working today. So they don't have time to bother with the next door neighbors.

S: Umhm. Now what about, where was your ah... ? When you were growing up, where did you get together socially? Was it through you church or, or through a club?

F: No it was through... we went to church and then there was, then my sister and I, we used to go out to the Lakeview, watch them out there dancing and things, you know, at that time.

S: And how did you get out to Lakeview?

F: We use to go on the yrolley.

S: Uh huh. So...

F: At that time there was electric cars running years ago.

S: And how old were you about then? About?

F: Oh, maybe fifteen or so when we were going out there.

S: So you didn't have to go to your church for a social, you could go?

F: Oh no! Go when you felt like it. [Laughs]

S: Really?

F: At that time.

S: So your parents weren't really strict?

F: Oh no.

S: No, they allowed you out? What else did you do for fun when you were growing up?

F: Oh we just worked and we went out to see them out the lake at that time, just dancing. Years ago there use to be a theater out there at the lake.

S: Oh, at the Lakeview?

F: Yah, there use to be a theater out there and we use to go out there once in awhile.

S: Uh huh. So was there any kind of socials at your church, like dances or...?

F: I never danced. I never danced. My older sister was the dancer of the house, but we never danced.

S: So, did you ever go and watch? You went to watch dances though?

F: Oh yes. Out at the Lakeview, we use to go out there and watch them dance and everything out there.

S: Uh huh. But you went to like festivals and so forth?

F: Yes and we use to go on hayrides at that time.

S: And what was... who organized the hayrides?

F: Well the churches that you used to go to once in awhile used to have hayrides. And then this other [unclear] use to have sleigh rides that you used to go into.

S: So they weren't oriented towards church, or towards an ethnic group like the French?

F: Oh no, just whatever you wanted to do.

S: Oh, okay. Now what do you remember about school? You went to public school?

F: Yah.

S: And do you remember where the school was?

F: Well when I was on Broadway we went to the Worthen Street School. That was on Worthen Street there. I went there, you know, I was only a kid then. About four years old or something we went there to kindergarten. And then when we moved out I went to Parker Avenue School out in Dracut, out in the Navy Yard. (S: Uh huh) And that's as far as I went.

S: Okay. Now, and that was Public School? (F: Yah). Did any of your family go to any private school?

F: No, never. (S: No?) Never. Never.

S: And did anybody go on to like college at that point in time?

F: No, not, not in my family. They never did.

S: Did your parents want anybody in the family to go on to school? (F: Huh?) Did your parents want anybody in the family to go on to college?

F: Well years ago they didn't do that so much as they are today. (S: Right, yah) You know things have changed, years bring... From the time I've been growing up till now things have changed an awful lot.

S: Yah, and peoples' attitudes?

F: Sure. People are different than they use to be.

S: Yah. And what other ways can you think of that they're different?

F: Well see, we use to have carnivals too, at the common and all over. You don't have those today.

S: When did you have the carnivals? Any special times?

F: Fourth of July. And they uses to have commons, up the 4th of July they used to have commons up there, North Commons. You don't have that today. Then there use to be carnivals around different places that you could go on a weekend to see. You don't see them around today. (S: Umhm) So there's lots of things that's changed since I was growing up.

S: Yah. Let's see. [Pause] You said you worked in Lawrence, and there was a strike going on in Lawrence at the time, but you weren't involved in the strike.

F: I wasn't in the strike, no, because I always worked in Marion's Hosiery in Lawrence.

S: Okay. So you went through the Depression working there?

F: I went down there, worked twenty six years in Lawrence.

S: And the Depression, how did that affect your company that you worked at?

F: We didn't have any trouble at our place at all.

S: You kept on going and people didn't get layed-off?

F: [Unclear] we yah, we went right through. We never had any trouble down there.

S: Really. So do you remember the flood that happened in Lowell?

F: Sure do!

S: You do? (laughs) Was your house affected by that or...?

F: No, because we lived right on top of the hill here.

S: Ya, but what do you remember about the flood? What did you see?

F: Well, I didn't see anything. My mother was sick at that time, so we didn't go out. (S: Aha) My oldest brother went out and my youngest brother went out, you know. He was working and he went out with, in a row boat getting people out of their houses and things at that time. But my mother was sick and we stayed in the house with her.

S: Uh huh. So they came back and told you about the flood?

F: Oh yes!

S: And how long did that affect people for? Like a week or two weeks or ... ?

F: Something like that. See the Aiken Street Bridge down here washed away on that. And people down on Lakeview Avenue they was all flooded in. But we were on top of the hill here so we didn't get it.

S: So you were lucky in that respect?

F: Yah, we were up here and we didn't get the flood.

S: So that did...um, did it affect many people's jobs that you know of?

F: I don't know. I don't know. I know that lots of people lost their lives over down around the corner there.

S: Yah, but you don't know like... Ah, your brothers did they work in the mills in Lowell?

F: My brothers? Yah. My oldest brother, he was a, he was a weaver my oldest brother.

S: And he worked in one of the Lowell Mills?

F: He worked in the Lowell, he worked at Carpet Mill over there, years ago my oldest brother did.

S: Aha, so how was his job affected by the flood and the Depression?

F: Well he was married at that time and he was passed away. So he didn't see the flood at that time.

S: Oh, I see.

F: No, some of my people died when they were younger.

S: When they were younger? Well that was a hard job being a weaver. So you worked for twenty six years down in Lawrence?

F: Down in Lawrence, Mass.

S: And what did you do after that?

F: I came home. Retired and came home here.

S: And you had your extended family to live with?

F: I was, no, my mother was dead at that time.

S: Umhm, so who... ?

F: I was just my oldest sister and I was here at that time. (S: I see) And ah, she worked down there for awhile with me and she took pneumonia. And she went in the hospital and the Doctor gave her the wrong kind of medicine, and she didn't live that long after that. So then I was left all alone. So then my youngest brother was married, and then I was down here by myself. He lived upstairs here and I was down here by myself for awhile.

S: So you had saved enough money to have retirement (F: ya) at that point? And you didn't have to? Ok. So I'd like to get back to um, when you were a little, when

you were a child. I know you say that you just had regular food and so forth. Do you remember any dishes that your mother made for dinner, anything?

F: I know on a Wednesday, during Lent, she'd always bake beans on Wednesday for Lent, during Lent.

S: Always beans, huh?

F: We had just the ordinary growing up food. Stews and meats of all kinds.

S: You had lots of meat?

F: Yes, and fish. At that time it was different as it is today.

S: Why is that?

F: Food was cheaper. (S: It was cheaper) Everything was cheaper years ago when we were growing up.

S: And when you went shopping did you go into, you know, a lot of different stores to buy your food?

F: Years ago you had a grocery man that used to come around, and you get your groceries off of them. Or we had a store, you'd call and go and get your order and pay it from week to week at that time. You had to get your groceries on weekly basis.

S: So you didn't like go to a special... ?

F: We didn't go to special places at all.

S: A special meat market or (F: no) a special... ? The grocery man just got everything?

F: Go wherever you wanted to go at that time. Wherever was the nearest to go to.

S: But they didn't have like supermarkets like they do today?

F: No not like they do today. They just had little markets.

S: Uh huh, now what about clothes? Did you make your own clothes then when you were younger?

F: Ah no, my mother bought the bigger part of our clothes.

S: She bought them?

F: Yah. The bigger part of our clothes, she use to buy them. Sometimes she did made them, if she had the chance to do it, she might sew. Get some material and sew some dresses or something but ...

S: Umhm. So what did your father do for a living in this area? (F: huh?) What did your father do for a living?

F: He worked at the locks and canal years ago as a runner over there. If anybody got in trouble he'd go down to the jail and bond them out you know, or something. (S: right) And then, that's what he was doing. And years ago I think my father use to be a molder. An iron molder. And he got hurt there and then he gave that up and went to the locks and canal to live, as far as I know.

S: Uh huh, okay. So he did pretty well for himself as far as a paycheck goes?

F: Oh yes, yah!

S: And he didn't have any trouble? So your mother never had to work?

F: Nope. My mother, my father died in 1910 and my mother brought us all up. She never went to work or anything.

S: So after 1910 you children brought the money in (F: Yah) for the family?

F: It was just my oldest sister and myself at that time, cause one of my sisters was sick. And ah, it was my oldest sister and I that use to run the house with my mother, for my mother.

S: Hm. Now, what do you remember about ah, when you were about that age? Well let's see World War I was what, about 1917?

F: Somewhere around that.

S: Yah. What do you remember about that, any special memories? (F: no) Anything different, that it, how it changed your lives?

F: No, never changed me or anything.

S: Did anybody in your family have to go overseas?

F: Ah, my old, my, one of my nephews was in the service, but not in the World. Not in the war. (S: umh) He went in after the war.

S: Yah, but your brothers didn't?

F: Oh no, my brothers, no, no, they never went in. No.

S: They didn't go it? So you don't remember anything having to, (F: no) you know, I mean rationing or anything like that?

F: No, It was just my nephew that was in, you know, went in to the service after the war was over with. (S: Umhm) Just Bobby, that ah, that had this to come up. He just got out. He was in the service for thirty five years. (S: Oh!) And he just got out.

S: So you weren't affected by that War? What about the second World War? Were you affected by that in anyway?

F: No.

S: Nobody in the family had to go away or... ?

F: No, the only thing I remember is that explosion that was down in Halifax. Did you hear about that years ago?

S: Right.

F: Well, one of my father's people, the biggest part of them was killed down there or hurt out of that explosion.

S: In Halifax? Did you go visiting them? (F: Huh?) Did you visit them a lot when you were younger?

F: No, no, no.

S: So what did you do for vacations, or did your family take vacations?

F: Well at that time you didn't have too many vacations. You stayed home. If you had a vacation you stayed home. There wasn't too many places to go, years ago like there are today.

S: Right, so you just relaxed at home?

F: Sure!

S: And you never, have you ever gone out of Lowell very much?

F: Out of Lowell? I was out in California. I've been all over the place.

S: On vacations now?

F: Yah.

S: But when did you start taking vacations, not until you were older?

F: Oh not, as I got a little older I took vacations. We went to Halifax. Then we went out to the Great Lakes. (S: Umhm) I've been all around different places.

S: What um... ? I'm curious about, you say the Depression didn't affect you in anyway. (F: No) Do you remember what you saw around Lowell as far as the Depression goes? I mean did you see alot?

F: Not much of anything.

S: You didn't see much?

F: It hasn't ah, the only place that really changed that I can see, we have no theaters here like we did years ago. (T: umhm) We had, we use to have all kinds of theaters here, Keith's Theater and the Strand Theater and all those. There's none of them here today.

S: And when did they go, during the Depression?

F: Oh no, right afterwards. They're gone now about four or five years ago, some of those places. (S: Oh, okay) And Merrimack Street ain't like it uses to be. (S: Why? What's changed) Well all the stores down there are gone and they build up other things down there.

S: What kind of stores were down there then?

F: There was, Pollards was down there, and there, cause ah, Lincoln store down there. (S: Uh huh) There was The Five and Ten's down there. You know everything is changed. And there used to be a butter store down there on Merrimack Street. Everything is changed around.

S: Is it hard to find your way around down there?

F: You said it! (S: [Laughs]) Today! One time you could tell people how to come to Lowell, but you can't today.

S: So it's really changed quite a bit?

F: Sure! (S: Yah) The depot use to be up on Thorndike Street. That's gone. So Lowell has changed around, that you don't know what Lowell is like today.

S: Yah, do you think it's changed for the better?

F: Well yes and no.

S: [Laughs] Why is that?

F: Well I don't know, there's too many places going up.

S: It's hard to keep track of them all?

F: Yah, boy!

S: Yah. [Pause] Well I know we asked about the Depression already, but you didn't see any real bad poverty or people starving or anything? When you went to the store or anything, you didn't see any beggars?

F: No, no.

S: So how do you think those people were taken care of? I mean, do you know? Like through your church, did you have anything?

F: Well I know it must have been through the church and Salvation Army. At that time they use to take care of the people.

S: Yah. Did you have any special events in your church to help those people or... ?

F: Ah, no. I was never in to any of that things. No.

S: Umhm. So what, in your church, did you belong to any special things in your church, like the choir, or ah (F: no, no) nothing like that? Okay.

F: Even the churches today are different than they use to be years ago.

S: Now why is that?

F: Well I don't know. Everything is changed around today and things.

S: What's changed in the church?

F: Well there's lots of things changed in the churches today.

S: Like the way they give the sermons or... ?

F: Yes, and of course the Ministers, the priests are not there like they use to be years ago. They're all... ?

Side A ends
Side B begins

S: So that the service has changed?

F: Yes, I think they've changed over some.

S: Do you think they're more liberal?

F: Well I don't know. It's hard to tell what, what it really is.

S: But it's not as nice as it used to be?

F: No. (S: No) Nothing is today. [Laughs]

S: Now what church did you go to?

F: St. Anne's.

S: That's the one downtown?

F: Yah.

S: Was there a big Congregation?

F: Yes, at that time.

S: Lot of people?

F: Yah. Used to go down there in the morning and I use to have a chum, and I use to go up to another church at night.

S: Oh, you went to another church at night? (F: Yah) What kind of church?

F: Congregation Church up around the (unclear) Street there.

S: Umhm. Now why did you do that? Why did you go to two churches in one day?

F: Oh, well I had a chum that went up there and I use to go with here once in awhile.

S: Uh huh, just for the fun of going out?

F: Sure!

S: Now were your parents both Episcopal?

F: Yah.

S: So you had no problem there as far as church goes?

F: No, no. My mother and father were married right here in Lowell..

S: And they were married at St. Anne's?

F: I don't know where they were married at, but I know they were married in Lowell. Cause ah, my brother went over to city hall and got their birth, their marriage certificate at one time. So that we know they were born, ah, marriage here in Lowell.

S: Umhm. Now are they buried here in Lowell also?

F: Yah.

S: Do you remember what cemetery?

F: They're up in the Edson Cemetery.

S: And thats where, now I'm not... ?

F: Up on Gorham Street.

S: Oh, okay.

F: On Gorham Street.

S: Uh huh. So when you were a child hm, when did... ? Do you remember when you first rode in a car?

F: What? An electric car or these?

S: Yes. Well any kind of car as opposed to say, horse and buggy.

F: Oh gosh,

S: You were pretty young?

F: I don't know. Horse and buggy and the cars were running at the same time.

S: When you were growing up?

F: Yes.

S: Yag. So when did your family first have a car? Do you remember?

F: Mmmm, right after the war my mother got a car.

S: Umhm.

F: And my oldest brother drove it for us.

S: Oh, your mother didn't drive it?

F: Oh no. Just one in the family, my brother.

S: How come your Mom didn't drive it?

F: Well she didn't want to bother driving it.

S: Was she frightened of it do you think?

F: Well she might have been. (S: Yah) She might have been. But my youngest brother he done all the driving for us.

S: And so did you and your sisters learn how to drive the car?

F: No, I never touched the wheel of a car.

S: No? [Laughs]

F: I know when they go and when they stop.

S: [Laughs] So how did you get around town, just by street cars?

F: Just walked.

S: Oh, you walk?

F: Sometimes we use to just walk around.

S: Umhm. Could you walk around say, in the downtown area at night time?

F: Sure, years ago you could walk anyplace, years ago.

S: And there was no problem?

F: And no problem at all. (S: Huh) But you couldn't do it today!

S: Yah. When do you think that changed?

F: Well, I don't know. It must have been seven or eight years ago that these places changed around, I should say.

S: Hmhm.

F: Now you're even afraid to leave your doors opened at night, or answer your doors at night, today.

S: Did you lock your doors at night when you were young?

F: No, we never did.

S: Never?

F: But today you wouldn't do it.

S: So you never had any problems with the different nationalities or...?

F: No, no.

S: Everybody got along pretty good?

F: Everybody got along. As my mother use to say, she would start a war of her own, with all of the people that's married through the family.

S: Hm. That's interesting. Now the French people who lived nearby, you said they spoke English very well, all of them?

F: Yes. They did very good.

S: So they must have been second generation?

F: They must have been. The Philians, the Foisy's, The Philians (S: Uh huh) all of those people who lived up around here.

S: Now did they go to their own special schools and churches?

F: I don't know, I don't know. See they were older, you know. When we came up here, they were older than we were, so we don't know. But all we know, that they, you know, lived up here.

S: So your family kept pretty much to themselves?

F: Oh yes.

S: And you didn't really socialize with the neighbors too much?

F: No, not since we came up here. (S: Ya) Years ago you'd go back and forth to people, but you don't today.

S: Umhm. That was when you were what, living at a different house than this one?

F: Yah. Today you have no neighbors around today that you can call in.

S: Uh huh. When you lived in Dracut did you have a lot of neighbors there?

F: Yes, we had a lot of friends out in Dracut at that time.

S: Uh huh, and was that a mixed neighborhood too, as far as all the different ... ?

F: Yah, everything was out there.

S: And everybody was pretty friendly?

F: Everybody was friendly with one another.

S: Hmhm.

F: Even if you wanted a cup of sugar you'd go the the next door neighbor and borrow it. You can't do it today!

S: Um. That was the same at your other house in Lowell here when you were little ah, what was the street you lived on when you were small?

F: I... down on Ludlam Street. I lived down on Ludlam Street there, and then we moved up here.

S: Okay. And in Ludlam Street you had a lot of different neighbors and you could..?

F: Yes we had good neighbors down there.

S: So never any problems or anything?

F: No, we had good friends at that time. But they're all gone today, you know? (S: aha) They're not around.

S: So once you moved up here you just kept to yourselves?

F: Just stayed by ourselves up here. (S: aha) You know?

S: Now why do you think that is?

F: Well, when you move away from a different neighborhood, you get in with a different people and you just forget your other people.

S: Hm. Did your friends come up here to visit you though?

F: We use to. (S: Yah)

S: But the other people, ah, like the French people, and the people who lived around here, they went to their own?

F: Oh, the French stayed by themselves, and you know, to their own churches and things.

S: And schools? (F: Yah) And there was just French who lived in this neighborhood?

F: Yah, as far as we know, when we came up here first, they called it the French Highlands.

S: Uh huh.

F: But there was no kids up here at that time. It's because they're all grown up, people up here.

S: Right. Was there anybody else who lived up here then, like the Irish or the Italians or anybody?

F: No, that's all I know. It was the French on this street when we came up here.

S: And at what point did that start to change? The neighborhood up here?

F: Well after they all passed away it was all new people that came in.

S: So when was that, like around World War II or... ?

F: Oh, must have been. Cause see I've been up here fifty six years in this house. So it was a long while ago that all this happen.

S: So all your friends that you have are from the old neighborhoods, not from this?

F: No, and all my old friends from the neighborhoods are all gone. (S: laughs) I'm the only one sticking around I think.

S: Do you have any friends from church left that are..?

F: No, no.

S: No, really?

F: I have an old...I have a friend down in Lawrence that I call up once in awhile that I worked with down there. (S: Umhm) But ah, I have no friends up around here, too many. I wanted to stay by myself more or less.

S: When you worked in Lawrence, how did you get to Lawrence by the streetcars?

F: We first went down the electric cars, at first. And then I got in with a crowd that had a machine, and they used to come to the house and pick me up. I used to go down in the machine.

S: Oh, and did you pay them for that or you just ... ?

F: I only paid them \$4.00 a week at that time to go from here to Lawrence.

S: Yah, and how much money were you making in Lawrence at that time?

F: At that time? Oh it was only a small wage we had when, because that was piecework. (S: umhm) You know, you get so much on piecework. Everybody had a different pays.

S: Oh, I see. Did you like that kind of work?

F: Yah.

S: And were you fast or..? You had to be for piece work huh?

F: It was piece work. (S: Yah) If you didn't move your hands fast enough you didn't make any money. [Both Chuckle]

S: Yah. What was it like in Lawrence? Was it a clean place to work in?

F: Oh yes, it was a nice place.

S: It was real nice?

F: It was a nice place to work in.

S: Uh huh. Do you remember what Street that was on?

F: Umm, Essex Street. (S: Umhm) No, what's the Greek Church on there? Essex Street is a main Street. I think it was Common Street. Nope. I'll have to get the name of the Street down there. But ah, it was the end of Essex Street.

S: Umhm. Do you remember your boss's name?

F: Huh?

S: Your boss, do you remember?

F: Yah, I don't remember the name down there.

S: Huh. Now do you remember whether, ah, your bosses that you had when you worked in, as a doffer and then when you worked in Lawrence, ah, were they of all one nationality like... ?

F: Ah, when I went in Lawrence it was the people that came for Germany on here. The names of [Unclear] and ah, they came from Germany on here and started a Lawrence, a hosiery in Lawrence. They had one in Germany and they came on here and started one in Lawrence.

S: And when was that about, do you remember what time that was?

F: I went down there about, 1938 I think I went down to Lawrence to work, because right after my mother died I went down there to work.

S: 19, what did you say, 30?

F: Around 38. (S: 38?) 1938 I think it was around there that I went down there when they came here.

S: So you worked for German people then?

F: Yup!

S: And how were they to work for?

F: Very good, they use to be wonderful!

S: Umhm. And they... [Phone rings-tape shuts off for a moment) So the German people were really nice to work for?

F: Very nice people to work for.

S: Okay. And when you worked in North Chelmsford (F: Yah) as a doffer, do you remember what your boss was then?

F: I don't remember. That was years ago. See you don't remember too far back. (S: umhm) There.

S: But they were nice people?

F: They were nice people to work.

S: So your work experiences were always really nice?

F: I...Yes.

S: You don't remember anything negative about it?

F: Oh no, no, no.

S: It was all really good?

F: As I say, everything is changing. When your growing up you remember things, and now everything is changing around so much that... See, years ago they use to come around with wood. (S: Umhm) You know, kindle wood and all that stuff.

Use to have an iceman to come around. You don't have any of that stuff today. So things, since I was growing up, things have changed an awful lot.

S: That's right. The dresses change too, hasn't it, all the clothing...?

F: Sure, everything has changed. So when you, were growing up, everything is different then it is today.

S: Umhm. When you were young did you share a bedroom with your sisters?

F: Yes. (S: You did?) We had to at that time. Cause if you only had three bedrooms and there was seven of you, you know, you had two brothers and the four sisters, you had to share bedrooms together.

S: You all had one bedroom. Now did you sleep like two to a bed or... ?

F: Yah sometimes, and sometimes we used to have our single beds. You know at that time you could get little beds to lay in.

S: Uh huh. And your parents had their own bedroom down the hall?

F: Oh yes. Yah.

S: So, okay. Then you had a dining room and a kitchen?

F: Dining Room and Kitchen. We always had dining room, and kitchen, and the bedrooms always.

S: And how did your Mom do her cooking? On a wood stove or... ?

F: Years ago you'd be on woodstoves. Yes, years ago it was a wood stove.

S: Uh huh. And then when did that change?

F: Oh, gee, I don't know. It was years ago. Oh, it must be in the early 80's. I mean ah, my father died in 1910. It must have been around 16 or something like that. I don't know. (S: Aha) That they changed.

S: And what kind did they change to then?

F: Well, see we changed from... Out there in Dracut where we lived, we had all the wood stoves. When we came here in the city we had the woodstoves and coal at that time.

S: Coal?

F: You had coal to shingle up and put in your fire.

S: Umhm.

F: Years ago.

S: Is that what heat at your house too, was coal?

F: Coal. Coal or coke, either one, years ago you had to put in your fires.

S: So that was what? In your basement you had a furnace?

F: We had ah, no, yes, we had it up, in your cellar, bring it up in a coal hog. (S: Uh huh)
Everyday you wanted any coal, or oil you had to go down cellar and bring it up and have it to put in your stove.

S: And that's what heated the house?

F: Yah. At that time you didn't have any heat in your bedrooms. You just had your heat in the rooms that you were downstairs in, (S: Ah) years ago.

S: So it's pretty cold?

F: Huh?

S: It was cold in the morning?

F: Sure! I was brought up the hard way you know. It's only these last years that you had the gas and things in the house.

S: Yah. So it took a long time to cook a meal back then?

F: Oh yes, at that time it took a long while to cook anything.

S: And you cooked everything from scratch?

F: Yah.

S: Like you made your own bread and...?

F: My mother made her own bread.

S: Did she have a special day for baking?

F: No, anytime she felt like making anything, she'd make it. (S: Yah) And at that time too, there used to be baker shops come around; baker carts come around that you could buy your stuff off of the baker carts, years ago.

S: So did you Mom buy from them rather than bake her own?

F: The weekends she might have buy off of the baker (S: aha) at weekends. If we were going to have a lot of company come in for over the weekend. Cause when we were growing up we always had a house full of company. (S: Oh you did?) Always, yes, always had a house full. When my mother was alive we always had a house full of company.

S: Now who was the company? Family?

F: Friends come in. Relations and chums come in and everybody come in.

S: From Lowell?

F: All around. (S: Umhm) Fitchbury, Tyngsboro, all around, use to come in.

S: And did your family do the same thing, go visiting to their houses also?

F: Well not so much. I don't know, our house seemed to be the house that everybody came to more or less, (S: Uh huh) years ago. I don't know why, but they always say, "We're going to Aunt Ada's house. We know we can get something in there to eat.

S: [Laughs].

F: And we always had a crowd here, always, when I was growing up.

S: So did you have a lot of singing and playing the piano?

F: Oh, yes, years ago we did.

S: Uh huh. And how about after your Mom died? Did the people still come to your house?

F: Not as much. They dropped of after my mother died. Some of them dropped off then. My sister and I we couldn't bother. [Laughs] It was a little too much then to have a crowd come in every Sunday.

S: So what was the ah, I don't know, was there anything special that you remember about the old days that stands out in your memory that has changed a lot now?

F: Well as I say, we had a lot of theaters around here at one time. And as I say, they used to be coming around with the coal and the coke, you'd see them coming around. You'd see the people coming around with the wood on the machine, on the carts, just buy, sell wood to you. But you don't see any of that today.

S: Yah. And have the actual houses changed here?

F: No the houses are just the same around here.

S: They're about the same?

F: They're all about the same around here.

S: But it's just the people that have changed?

F: Just the people that's changed in here.

S: Uh huh, and different ethnic people or... ?

F: Yha, the only thing that's changed is over there at the undertaker. That's where Foisy's lived, over there where the undertaker is. That's where, Paul Foisy lived over there.

S: Umhm, and that's about it as far as change goes?

F: No, there wasn't too much of change around this neighborhood.

S: But down in downtown?

F: The changes down around Merrimack Street and those places are changes.

S: A lot. Just the stores are changed.

F: Changing around down there.

S: Yah, Okay, that's good. Okay, I think that's fine.

Tape was shut off, but begins again

F: ...and come from Dracut, over here, way up, we were up around Rock Street, the other side of the city, for me to get the gas in my chest for the whooping cough.

S: The gas from the... ?

F: From the coke.

S: And do you think that helped? [Laughs] Did they thing they...

F: They said years ago they did. They said years ago that helped you.

S: Really?

F: And years ago they use to make their own cough syrup. Used to get flax seed and lemons, licorice and put it on the stove and boil it, and then strain it, and you'd have that to drink for coughs.

S: So did you ever go to the doctor?

F: Years ago you didn't go to the doctor too much. You had your home remedies years ago.

S: Yah. So you don't remember going to the doctor at all when you were little?

F: No.

S: Never, or the doctor coming to you I should say? (Laughs)

F: The doctor used to come to you if you had one, but you didn't had to have a doctor at that time, cause you had your own stuff you could take. We used to go on the (shumac?) as those red berries that use to be out in the fields. We used to get them to steep them for coughs. No, years ago they use to make their own cough syrup.

S: And how long do you remember doing that for, until...?

F: Oh, until we were growing up.

S: And then that changed?

F: We use to make our own cough syrup.

S: Huh. So you don't ever remember going to a doctor or hospital or..?

F: Not years ago.

S: Nobody in your family?

F: Not years ago we didn't. Not years ago. (S: Okay) Just in these late years that we use to go to the doctors.

S: Yah, (laughs)

F: Because at that time you didn't bother with doctors, [Laughs] doctors too much.

S: Yes. Okay that's great!

Interview ends

jw